

**City of Mora, MN**  
**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**February 2, 2021**

Present: Gene Anderson, Jody Anderson, Brett Baldwin, Doyle Casavant, Bob Jensen, Dan Johnson, Lonnie Ness and Alan Skramstad  
Absent: None  
Staff Present: Lindy Crawford, Beth Thorp and Sara King  
Others Present: Jeff Wig (via WebEx) and Sandy Voigt (via WebEx)

1. Call to order. Skramstad called the meeting to order at 2:01 pm.
2. Oath of Office. Jensen pledged the oath of office for a 6-year term expiring on December 31, 2026.
3. Roll Call.
  - G. Anderson – Present
  - J. Anderson – Present
  - Baldwin – Present
  - Casavant – Present (via WebEx)
  - Jensen – Present
  - Johnson – Present
  - Ness – Present
  - Skramstad – Present
4. Adopt Agenda. Motion by Johnson, second by Ness to adopt the February 2, 2021 agenda as presented. All present voted by roll call:
  - Aye: J. Anderson, Baldwin, Jensen, Johnson, Ness and Skramstad
  - Nay: None
  - No Response: CasavantWith the majority voting aye, motion carried.
5. Election of Officers. Motion by Johnson, second by J. Anderson to elect Skramstad as President, Casavant as Vice President, and Jensen as Treasurer. All present voted by roll call:
  - Aye: J. Anderson, Baldwin, Jensen, Johnson, Ness and Skramstad
  - Nay: None
  - No Response: CasavantWith the majority voting aye, motion carried.
6. Minutes. Motion by J. Anderson, second by Jensen to approve the minutes of the November 5, 2020 meeting as presented. All present voted by roll call:
  - Aye: J. Anderson, Baldwin, Jensen, Johnson, Ness and Skramstad
  - Nay: None
  - No Response: CasavantWith the majority voting aye, motion carried.

7. Claims. Motion by Casavant, second by Johnson to approve the November 2020 claims as presented. All present voted by roll call:

Aye: J. Anderson, Baldwin, Jensen, Johnson, Ness and Skramstad

Nay: None

No Response: Casavant

With the majority voting aye, motion carried.

Motion by J. Anderson, second by Jensen to approve the December 2020 claims as presented. All present voted by roll call:

Aye: J. Anderson, Baldwin, Casavant, Jensen, Johnson, Ness and Skramstad

Nay: None

No Response: None

With all present voting aye, motion carried.

Motion by J. Anderson, second by Johnson to approve the January 2021 (parts 1 and 2) claims as presented. All present voted by roll call:

Aye: J. Anderson, Baldwin, Jensen, Johnson, Ness and Skramstad

Nay: None

No Response: Casavant

With the majority voting aye, motion carried.

8. Open Forum. No members of the audience were present for open forum.

9. Special Business.

- a. Presentation from Initiative Foundation and Consideration of Contribution. Jeff Wig, Initiative Foundation Vice President for Entrepreneurship, was present via WebEx. Wig commented that the last time he presented to the Mora EDA was near the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic (May 5, 2020) and that much had changed since then. He added that he was aware that the city and Kanabec County had done much to assist businesses impacted by the pandemic. Wig provided a summary of programs offered by the Initiative Foundation, general support for entrepreneurs and economic development, direct assistance to the city and Kanabec County, business loans to Mora and Kanabec County businesses, the Initiative Foundation's COVID response, and steps to move forward following the pandemic. Wig thanked the city for its longstanding support of the Initiative Foundation and for considering continued support in 2021. Skramstad stated that the Initiative Foundation submitted a contribution request of \$2,250. Jensen asked if the contribution was included in the 2021 budget; Thorp confirmed that it was a budgeted item. Motion by Jensen, second by Johnson to authorize a contribution of \$2,250 to the Initiative Foundation. All present voted by roll call:

Aye: J. Anderson, Baldwin, Casavant, Jensen, Johnson, Ness and Skramstad

Nay: None

No Response: None

With all present voting aye, motion carried. Wig thanked the EDA.

- b. Presentation from GPS 45:93 and Consideration of Annual Membership Dues. Sandy Voigt, GPS 45:93 President, was present via WebEx to request the EDA's continued membership in GPS 45:93 in 2021. Voigt reviewed current members of the regional economic development organization, the organization's history and ongoing support from members, the



organization's commitment to continue its efforts through the pandemic; and, provided a summary of current activities. Voigt stated that she was elected to serve as President of GPS 45:93 in 2021 and Thorp was elected to serve as Vice President. Voigt informed the EDA that a webinar was scheduled for February 18<sup>th</sup> titled "Harnessing the Power of Our Watershed for Economic Development", a project organized through North Woods and Waters of the St. Croix Heritage Area in collaboration with other organizations including GPS 45:93; Voigt encouraged EDA members to attend. Voigt also informed the EDA about a promotional video that was produced by GPS 45:93 to market the region's shovel ready sites, including the Mora Industrial Park, with a launch party scheduled on March 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>. Voigt requested the EDA's continued membership in GPS 45:93 at the 2021 rate of \$850. Ness asked if membership dues were included in the 2021 budget; Thorp confirmed that it was a budgeted item. Motion by Ness, second by Casavant to authorize continued membership in GPS 45:93 in 2021 and payment of \$850. All present voted by roll call:

Aye: J. Anderson, Baldwin, Casavant, Jensen, Johnson, Ness and Skramstad

Nay: None

No Response: None

With all present voting aye, motion carried. Voigt thanked the EDA.

#### 10. New Business.

- a. Financial Management Plan for Mora Housing & Redevelopment Authority. Crawford requested that the EDA consider financial participation in the preparation of a Financial Management Plan for the Mora Housing & Redevelopment Authority (HRA) at a cost of \$2,834 (1/3 of the total cost). Crawford explained that the HRA was experiencing financial pressure and the plan would help analyze 5- and 10-year plans as well as capital plans for the HRA. Crawford reminded commissioners that housing was a stated goal of the EDA and commented that the plan would most likely benefit the EDA as well as the HRA. Crawford stated that the HRA Board had accepted the proposal presented by Ehler's and approved paying 1/3 of the cost, adding that the City Council would be asked to consider contributing the final 1/3 of the cost. Johnson asked if this was a similar plan to what the EDA had supported in the past; Crawford responded that the HRA had never had a Financial Management Plan prepared before. Skramstad shared with fellow commissioners that the HRA was presently experiencing troubles and the City Council would be assuming the role of the HRA Board. Motion by J. Anderson, second by Johnson to participate in the preparation of a Financial Management Plan for the Mora Housing & Redevelopment Authority at a cost not to exceed \$2,834. All present voted by roll call:

Aye: J. Anderson, Baldwin, Casavant, Jensen, Johnson and Skramstad

Nay: None

No Response: None

Abstained: Ness

With the majority voting aye, motion carried.

- b. Participation in Kanabec County Economic Development Authority. Thorp explained that the Kanabec County Economic Development Authority (KCEDA) was established in 2016 and the City Council adopted a resolution electing to participate in the KCEDA in that same year, and that state statute allowed the city to consider continued membership every fifth year from the date the resolution was adopted with the first opportunity to review being 2021. Thorp stated that the staff report provided a summary of economic development activities referenced in the city's resolution of participation, and asked the EDA to provide a

recommendation to the City Council regarding continued participation. Thorp commented that staff was recommending continued participation as the KCEDA had done good things for the community. J. Anderson inquired about two specific economic development activities highlighted in the staff report, including the Telework Center and Economic Gardening; Thorp reported that the Telework Center was permanently closed and Economic Gardening was a short-term GPS 45:93 project that had been completed. J. Anderson followed up by asking about Pine Tech's current use of the former Telework Center; Thorp stated that Pine Tech was using the space in a similar capacity as was intended for the Telework Center but that it was separate from the Telework Center project. Motion by Casavant, second by J. Anderson to recommend continued participation in the Kanabec County Economic Development Authority. All present voted by roll call:

Aye: J. Anderson, Baldwin, Casavant, Jensen, Johnson, Ness and Skramstad

Nay: None

No Response: None

With all present voting aye, motion carried.

- c. Economic Development Incentive Based on Electric Usage. Crawford introduced a 2018 incentive developed by the Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (SMMPA), an incentive offering credits to eligible businesses based on electric usage. Crawford explained that the incentive was developed to attract new businesses to SMMPA member communities as well as expansions of existing businesses. Crawford asked the EDA to consider interest in the program before presenting it to the Mora PUC and City Council for further consideration. J. Anderson expressed frustration with incentive programs being developed for large businesses, new businesses and distressed businesses but not those "middle" businesses that were holding their own. Johnson asked if the dollar value of the incentive was significant or more of a gesture; Crawford explained that the value would be different for each business based on usage but that it may be enough incentive for a large organization to locate in Mora rather than another community. Jensen asked if the credits would come from SMMPA or the local utility; Crawford responded that the credits would come from SMMPA. Jensen then commented that the incentive could be considered another "tool in the toolbox". Motion by Johnson, second by Jensen to recommend use of the SMMPA-developed incentive. All present voted by roll call:

Aye: J. Anderson, Baldwin, Casavant, Jensen, Johnson, Ness and Skramstad

Nay: None

No Response: None

With all present voting aye, motion carried.

- d. Notice of Resignation – Ness. Thorp stated that Commissioner Ness had submitted his notice of resignation for the EDA's consideration. Johnson expressed support for Ness' decision. Motion by Johnson, second by Baldwin to accept Ness' resignation. All present voted by roll call:

Aye: J. Anderson, Baldwin, Casavant, Johnson and Skramstad

Nay: Jensen

No Response: None

Abstained: Ness

With the majority voting aye, motion carried. Skramstad wished Ness well in his work with the Kanabec County Economic Development Authority.



11. Old Business.

None.

12. Communications.

- a. Quarterly Financial Reports. The EDA received 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2020 financial reports prepared by Accountant Sara King. Jensen commented that it appeared that the EDA was financially stable; King responded that the EDA was indeed financially stable and well capitalized.
- b. Kanabec County EDA Meeting Minutes. The EDA received September, October, November and December 2020 meeting minutes for the Kanabec County EDA. Skramstad commented that the Kanabec County EDA did a nice job of supporting Mora and Kanabec County businesses with pandemic relief funds.

13. Reports.

- a. City of Mora COVID-19 Emergency Assistance Fund. Thorp reported that only one COVID-19 Emergency Assistance Fund (EAF) grant had been requested – and subsequently approved – since the EDA allocated additional funds to the grant program in November 2020. Thorp explained that the EAF program had been advertised in the city's newsletter, on the city's website and on Facebook, but there seemed to be little interest from business owners. Jensen asked if the remaining grant funds could be disbursed amongst those organizations that had already applied for and received EAF grant funds; Thorp responded that businesses have been told that they're only eligible to receive one grant but that could be changed by the EDA if desired. J. Anderson commented that perhaps not all past grant recipients were still in need of EAF grant funds or were still eligible per the guidelines. Thorp shared that one EAF loan recipient had not yet begun making loan payments and the default may need to be addressed by the EDA / city in the near future. Jensen asked what would happen to the EAF funds if they were not utilized for grants and loans; Crawford responded that the funds would remain in the Mora Industrial Commercial (MIC) Loan Program where the funds originated. Johnson asked if there was an end-date to the EAF program; Thorp responded that the EDA extended the program to June 30, 2021 at its November 2020 meeting. Johnson commented that there was still time for businesses to apply for funds, adding that he was not in favor of disbursing the remaining funds amongst past grant recipients prior to June 30, 2021. Johnson asked if the remaining grant funds could be tied to other relief programs, such as PPP, to provide additional grant funds to past grant recipients if they could demonstrate a loss during the pandemic. J. Anderson commented that the funds may be better used for other purposes, such as tourism efforts, that would benefit the entire community. Jensen stated that he did not believe funds from the Revolving Economic Development (RED) Loan Program could be used for activities such as tourism efforts; Thorp responded that the EAF program was funded through the MIC Loan Program and those funds were unrestricted. Thorp suggested and the consensus of the EDA was to continue advertising the EAF program until the program expired in June and then the EDA could continue its discussion of how to use any unused EAF funds at its August meeting.
- b. Small Cities Development Program. Thorp shared that the two-year residential rehabilitation program was successful with applications received and approved for all four residential categories, including owner-occupied single family, single family rentals, duplex rentals, and multi-family rentals. Thorp reminded the EDA that the city was in the early part of the first year of the two-year program and the level of interest in the program was encouraging.
- c. Board & Commission Contact Information. Thorp requested that all EDA members provide staff with an updated contact information sheet.

- d. Kanabec County Grant Program. Jensen asked for a report on the county's current pandemic relief grant program; Ness shared that the program is open to all businesses and information can be obtained from Kanabec County Economic Development Director Heidi Steinmetz or the county's website. Thorp stated that she'll share a link to the county's program with commissioners following the meeting.

14. Adjournment. Motion by Johnson, second by Jensen to adjourn. All present voted by roll call:

Aye: J. Anderson, Baldwin, Jensen, Johnson, Skramstad

Nay:

No Response: Casavant

Abstained: Ness

With all present voting aye, the meeting was adjourned at 2:57 pm.



Alan Skramstad, President



Beth Thorp, Secretary